December 2021

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
319 DOWNTOWN PLAZA
FAIRMONT, MN 56031-1776

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First Congregational UCC
319 Downtown Plaza
Fairmont, MN 56031

WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE

First Congregational
United Church of Christ
Fairmont, Minnesota

Rev. Cory Germain
Minister

Ann Osborn
Administrative Assist

Joyce Jorgenson
Choir Director

How to reach us….

Church Office
507-235-5382
Hours: Tuesday—Friday
9:30 a.m. 12:30 p.m.

E-mail
uccsecretary319@gmail.com

Web Site Address
www.fairmontucc.org

Rev. Cory Germain

Office Hours:

Tuesday 9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Wednesday 12:30 p.m. through evening meetings & activities
Thursday 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
Friday 9:30 a.m.—12:30 p.m.
Rev. Cory's phone: 507-399-8282

Worship Hours
Sunday School 9:15
Worship 10:30
Communion the first Sunday of every month.

The Reverend's Ruminations - December 2021

Fall has slowly fallen by the wayside, and while the final days of November have proven quite mild, as Minnesotans we do realize that the white stuff will be coming soon enough. After a year like 2020, I hope that your 2021 family Thanksgiving was a little more "normal," and that your Christmas plans this year are likewise closer to "the good ol' days," even as we make some additional considerations to keep everyone healthy. I hope that you plan to join us for worship throughout December, not only at our **5:30pm candlelight Christmas Eve service**, but in the weeks of anticipation leading up to that holy celebration. By the time you read this, the church season of Advent will already have begun on November 28, building our anticipation toward the miracle of Christmas.

As you'll notice in the newsletter calendar, **on December 5th, children of all ages are invited to take part in the fun First Congo UCC tradition of building "gingerbread" houses during the Sunday School hour**… a craft that has been updated to utilize toaster pastries as the building blocks for sturdier houses. The youth of our church have already begun rehearsing for their **annual Christmas program, which will be presented during the morning worship service on December 19th.** The adult choir will not be presenting a Christmas cantata this year, but there will likely be some great special music from the many talented singers and instrumentalists of our congregation.

Contrary to what retailers have been spouting already for weeks, "Black Friday" (which apparently needed to start even earlier this year with "Pre-Black Friday" sales) is NOT the beginning of the Advent or Christmas season. In the Christian tradition, the anticipation of the Advent season comes to light in the voice of Old Testament prophets. Jeremiah tells us, *"The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will fulfill the promise I made… I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land"* (33:14-15). Between the anticipation of the Messiah's birth and his execution of justice and righteousness in the land, there lies a journey—one both familiar and unknown at the same time. During the Advent season the church prepares for the coming of Christ, much like a couple preparing their own home for the arrival of a new baby. There seems so much to do: shopping, sending cards, cleaning, making guest lists, decorating, attending special concerts, baking, and even travel. But before we put the cart before the horse, perhaps we need to slow down and remember to keep Christ in Christmas.

Each of us has our own vivid memories of the excitement, anticipation, and wonder that is rolled into Advent and the celebration of Christmas. Some recall traditional family gatherings, a particular ethnic menu, a favorite gift, or even a funny mishap that made our celebration special. However, for some this is a season when the loss of a loved seems particularly poignant. If that is the case for you, I invite you to attend the **Community Blue Christmas service** that our church will be hosting this year, **Sunday December 19th at 6:30pm.**

As the anticipation of Advent builds, God's word continues to speak through the expectation of the scriptures. The Feasting on the Word commentary series sums up the season this way:

> *"At Advent, God's people summon the courage and the spiritual strength to remember that the holy breaks into the daily. In tiny ways, we can open our broken hearts to the healing grace of God, who opens the way to peace… Advent is not a season for passive waiting and watching. It is a season of wailing and weeping, of opening up our lives and our souls with active anticipation and renewed hope."*

Let us strive to let the holy break into our daily lives, during Advent and throughout the coming year.

Blessings to you and yours this Christmas and into 2022!

Rev. Cory Germain

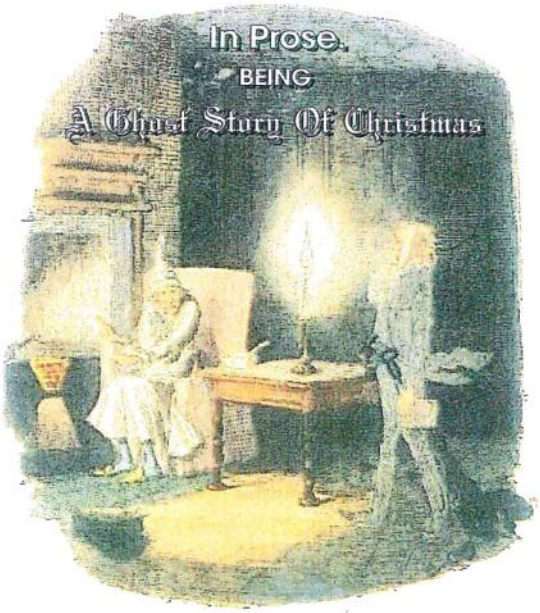
December 2021

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 4:00 Confirmation 5:30 Worship Board	**2** 9:30 Bible Study 6:00 TOPS	**3**	**4**
5 Communion Sunday 9:15 Sunday School Bldg Gingerbread Houses 10:30 Worship	**6**	**7** 10:00 Lakeview Communion	**8** 4:00 Confirmation 5:15 Mission Board 5:30 Diaconate 6:30 CE Board	**9** 5:15 Hospitality 7:00 Facilities Board 6:00 TOPS	**10** 9:00 a.m. Council Agenda Items Deadline	**11**
12 9:15 Sunday School 10:30 Worship	**13** 5:00-6:00 FCH Foundation	**14**	**15** 4:00 Confirmation 5:45 Church Council	**16** 6:00 TOPS	**17**	**18**
19 9:15 Sunday School 10:30 Worship with Children's Christmas Program 6:30 Community Blue Christmas Service	**20**	**21** 10:00 Goldfinch Communion	**22**	**23** 6:00 TOPS	**24** Office Closed CHRISTMAS Eve 5:30 Candlelight Christmas Eve Svc	**25** MERRY CHRISTMAS
26 10:30 Worship *Blessing Box Collection*	**27** 5:30 Parent To Parent	**28**	**29** 5:30 Free Community Meal	**30**	**31** Office Closed New Years Eve	

Merry & Bright

You are Invited to a
Public Reading of Charles Dickens'

A CHRISTMAS CAROL



Thurs., Dec. 9th • 7 p.m.

FREE & Open To All Ages

Red Rock Center For the Arts
222 East Blue Earth Avenue, Fairmont

Donations will be accepted for Heaven's Table Food Shelf in Fairmont
If you have any questions, please call (507) 848-4414 or (507) 848-7284.

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FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UCC

FAIRMONT, MN

CHURCH COUNCIL MINUTES FOR 11-17-2021

Members Present: Marilyn Forstrom, Abigail Roiger, Cathy Celander, Jane Kotewa, Sue Kruse, Wendy Ziemer, Kay Campe, Catherine Johnson, Larry Thompson, Dave Adams and Christina Hainy. Ex-officio members present: Dara Bliesmer, Ass't Treasurer. Robbin Celander and Pastor Germain were unable to attend.

The Council met in Heritage Hall. The meeting was called to order and was led in prayer by Moderator, Marilyn Forstrom. Minutes of the October 20th meeting were approved as printed. Motion M/S/C (Jane/Larry).

Treasurer's Report: Catherine presented the treasurer's report. We had $90,812.54 in the operating funds at the end of October. Motion to receive treasurer's report was M/S/C (Wendy/Larry).

Finance/Business: Thanks to everyone who participated in the Stewardship Drive. We received 32 pledges and $82,000 was pledged for 2022. A motion was made to move $10,000 from the Operating Reserve to the General Account. (M/S/C Jane/Abigail) There was a motion to disband the Capital Campaign committee for this year. (M/S/C Catherine/Wendy)

Pastor's Report: Pastor Cory was absent.

BOARD REPORTS:

Christian Education: Wendy shared that on December 5th, gingerbread houses will be made during Sunday school. Pop tarts and candy donations are still needed. The Christmas program will be held on Sunday, December 19th in the basement.

Hospitality: Cathy reported that the Hospitality board did not have a meeting but have been busy baking cookies. December 3rd is the cookie tray pick-up date.

Facilities: Larry reported that gutters, landscaping in front of the storage shed, and insulation installation of the shed are done. The front sidewalk may not get done before winter. They are working on where to put the completed Blessing Box/Little Free Pantry. The next project is to add 2 railings going up to the altar on the sides.

Diaconate: Sue did not have anything to add to the written board minutes.

Missions: Kay reported that Jon Riggs was done building the Little Free Pantry (displayed in Heritage Hall). Donations covered the cost of building. They are serving cider and popcorn at the Glows Parade on Friday, November 19th. Be thinking about a month to serve the free community meal in 2022.

Worship: Dave shared that Christmas is coming, and decorating the church will occur on November 21st after church. They are also looking for more people for Pulpit Supply.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Stewardship Drive: (discussed in Finance/Business)

Nominating: Jane reported that December 5th is the deadline, and they are hoping to have all positions filled.

Personnel: Met with all but Pastor Cory. Motion M/S/C for staff Christmas gifts by Abigail/Wendy.

OLD BUSINESS: No COVID changes. There will be a float with lights/carolers and popcorn/cider served for Glows Parade. Marilyn is working on the Time and Talent survey.

NEW BUSINESS: Discussion on a talk about the future of the church.

Memorials

Date	Memory/Honor of	Designation	From
24-Oct	Steve & Janine Draper Anniversary		Margaret Weaver
31-Oct	Wanda Johnson Birthday	Starfish	Ann Hartmann
7-Nov	Memory of Lori Marushin	Starfish	Jane Kotewa
7-Nov	Donna & Dean Grotte Anniversary	Starfish	Virginia Riedesel
7-Nov	Memory of Lori Marushin		Daniel & Debra Thate
7-Nov	Donna & Dean Grotte Anniversary		Margaret Weaver
7-Nov	Memory of Peggy Heinrich	General	Les Heinrich
14-Nov	Memory of Richard Harder		Wanda Anderson
14-Nov	Memory of Joanne Montgomery		Wanda Anderson
14-Nov	Honor of Joy Pollock	Starfish	Virginia Riedesel
14-Nov	Ken & Joy Rachuy	Starfish	Virginia Riedesel
14-Nov	Ken & Joy Rachuy		

With Gratitude

Our congregation is grateful for the very generous gifts from the Mildred and Warren Brodt Trust. The gifts toward Capital expenses have helped make possible the restoration of the North Tower and stonework of our church building. Further gifts from their Trust will help support general and special programs of our church.
Our church will be blessed for many years by the love and confidence the Brodt's placed in our church.
Thanks be to God!

Merry & Bright

DECEMBER BLESSING BOX – The Christmas Fund

This offering is one of the "5 for 5" offerings of the United Church of Christ

The Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund

"For Such a Time as This" Esther 4:14

The Christmas Fund has been caring for active and retired clergy and lay employees of the United Church of Christ for over 100 years, providing emergency grants, supplementation of small annuities and health premiums, and Christmas "Thank You" gift checks each December to our lower-income retirees.

Over the past 18 months, the emergency financial needs of many who serve the church increased dramatically. Many of our clergy continue to bear the consequences of lost or decreased income. These difficult times make the need for the Christmas Fund more urgent than ever.

United Church of Christ congregations and members have blessed the Christmas Fund with their generosity for many years. This year, your care and compassion will be especially appreciated by those servants of the church who are facing a time of need.

All month we will share stories of how the Christmas Fund has touched Pastors and their families over the years.

We will take our offering for the Christmas Fund throughout the month of December. Please prayerfully consider your gift.

Please note ***Christmas Fund*** on your donation.

All loose offering given on Christmas Eve will go to the Christmas Fund.

Remember . . . don't just count your blessings . . . share them!

Interview with
Conrad & Lorie Zoeller
by Lee Hanning

Lorie was born the second child of Gail & Carol Suter of East Chain. Her siblings are Kathy, Brian, and Betsy. (An interesting side story about her parents: Gail is the oldest of ten children. When they count all the spouses, children, and 28 grandchildren of the Suter family there are 165--soon to be 166--and all the elders are still living!!)

Lorie grew up on the family dairy farm. She attended East Chain School and was graduated in 1979. During those high school years, she and Conrad Zoeller (who had graduated from earlier in 1977) became high-school sweethearts.

Conrad and Lorie were married June 16, 1979 and lived on the family farm. They moved an older home onto the new basement they constructed and continue to live there now. They became parents to:

Angie b. 1980--married to Kevin Ritter (relative of Rev. Penny Ritter), Angie & Kevin live in Belle Plaine and have two children: Tyler, 18 yr. and Chloe, 16 yr.

Eric b. 1982--lives in Fairmont and attends STEP, Inc.,

Allie b.1986--married to Michael Brown 2014. Sadly, Allie died Oct.6, 2015 in a car accident.

Then, Lorie attended Jackson Technical School in 1987-1988 and started working at STEP, Inc. where she has worked for 34 years!

After his graduation, Conrad began farming and a truck driving for the Fairmont Canning Company and also Northrup King Seed Co. in Amboy for a while. He now drives the STEP, Inc. bus and has done so for about 15 years.

Conrad and Lorie have a Fifth-wheel camper and love to go camping! They usually try to get away a couple times during the year. Their son-in-law Kevin's brother Dan has a campground in Lanesboro, MN and they enjoy spending time there with family.

We had such an enjoyable conversation during the interview. It was a lot of fun for me to visit with Lorie. We've know each other for years and yet there were so many things I learned! THANKS FOR SHARING!

***Worship services from First Congregational UCC are available (and searchable by date) alongside the other great content on the rightnow** MEDIA **website & app!**

ADVENT can be a busy season for many of us, but it's more than the scurry of cleaning, baking, mailing, and other myriad preparations for the traditions of Christmas in our homes. Advent is an important time of anticipation toward the real celebration—the birth of a Savior in a lowly manger in Bethlehem. The adult class is going to be discussing this very series during our Sunday School meeting time, but with some anticipated interruptions to our schedule and five episodes in the study, I thought everyone might like the chance to catch this series as we prepare for Christmas in our own lives. Check out the description for ***Advent*** with Derwin Gray:

> *Who exactly is Jesus? What kind of God would come to earth as a human? As Christmas approaches, the season of Advent offers us a chance to reflect on our savior, his purpose, and the surprising ways he invited people near to him. Join pastor Derwin Gray in this five-session Advent study as he unveils King Jesus—the God-man who defied expectations, the king of all creation who humbled himself to serve and die, the friend to sinners who wants to lift us up.*

Before you know it, a NEW YEAR will be upon us. I know I'm not alone in hoping that it will continue to improve from the last couple!?! But let's face it: it's high time that many of us make some *authentic* New Year's resolutions that have the potential to truly change our spiritual lives. ***Resolution*** is a three-part series of that will help you look toward the coming year with hope and determination. Here's a brief description:

> *What breaks your heart?*
> *What would you want people lining up to thank you for at the end of your life?*
> *In this 3-part series, Pastor Andy Stanley challenges us to make a resolution that makes a difference.*

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*Do you still need to sign up for a FREE **rightnow** MEDIA account?
There are 3 convenient ways: Go to **https://www.rightnow.org/Account/Invite/FCONG**
Text **FCONG to 49775,** *or* scan this QR code with your smartphone camera or code reader:

Once logged in to your *FREE* account, now updated to **rightnow** MEDIA 3.0, you can click directly on "First Congregational UCC" near the top of the page to access the "Fairmont Worship Services" channel, or "Pastor Cory's Picks"—which is where you'll find videos I've recommended here, as well as others that interest me. Stay tuned… the list changes as I discover new picks! If you've discovered a show or video on **rightnow** MEDIA that you think others would enjoy, email me and I'll promote it in next month's column.

~ Pastor Cory

Christian Ed

Christian Education Activities for December

Sunday December 5: Come make Gingerbread Houses at 9:15 in Heritage Hall. All families are encouraged to come and work together to make Gingerbread houses. A light breakfast will be served.

How the Grinch found the Christ in Christmas

December 19 at 10:30

The Children's Christmas Program will be presented in Heritage Hall as part of our morning worship

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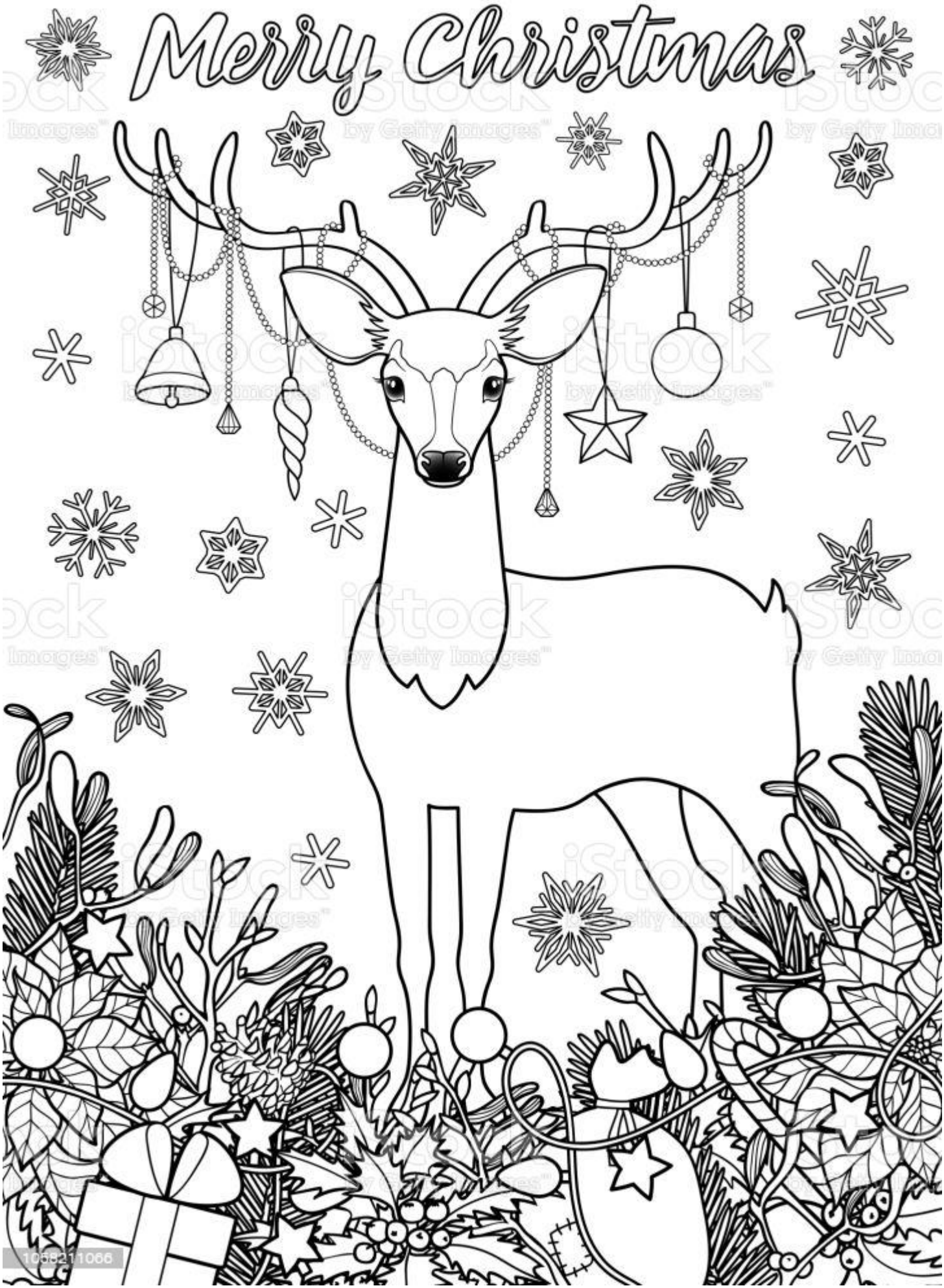
Christmas Program practice: Wednesdays Dec 1, 8 and 15 from 6:30 to 7:30. The Sunday School Facebook page (First Congregational UCC Sunday School) will have updates about which kids need to be there each Wednesday.



COLORING PAGE

MERRY CHRISTMAS & HAPPY NEW YEAR MENU

Submitted by an anonymous First Cong UCC member

BEEF BURGUNDY

2 lbs. round steak, cubed
1 4 oz. can mushrooms
1 can cream of mushroom soup
¼ c. dry red wine
1 pkg. Lipton dry onion soup mix
Carefully stir together and cook in crockpot for 8 hours on low. Do not add additional liquid.

GLAZED CARROTS

1 two pound bag of baby carrots
2 T. butter and 2 T. brown sugar
Cook carrots to el dente stage. Add butter and brown sugar, salt and pepper.

SPINACH SALAD WITH WARM DIJON DRESSING

Dressing:

¼ t. minced garlic	**1/3 c. honey**
1 ½ t. minced onion	**¼ c. red wine vinegar**
2 T. Dijon mustard	**½ c. oil**

Whisk together all but oil. Add in steady stream, whisking until emulsified.
Heat in microwave until warm.

Salad:

one lb. spinach
½ lb. bacon, cooked and crumbled
1 c. pecan pieces, toasted lightly

CRANBERRY CAKE WITH BUTTER SAUCE

3 T. butter	2 c. flour
1 c. sugar	1 c. milk
3 t. baking powder	2 c. cranberries
¼ t. salt	

Beat together all ingredients except cranberries. Fold in berries. Spread batter into 8 or 9 inch pan. Bake 35 to 40 minutes at 350. Serve warm with butter sauce.
Butter sauce: 1 c. sugar, ½ c. cream, 1 T. flour, 1 T. vinegar, ½ c. butter. Mix together and heat over high heat. Add 1 t. vanilla. Serve warm.

Merry Christmas

Hy-Vee and Fareway Receipts Report as of 14 November 2021

During the last four weeks $8,562.37 (5.70%) worth of Hy-Vee slips were received. After 16 weeks, Hy-Vee is at $62,258.17 (41.76%) toward the 14th $150,000 goal.

During the same four weeks, $9,103.94 (6.07%) worth of Fareway slips were received. After 45 weeks, Fareway is at $61,232.51 (40.42) toward our 4th $150,000 goal.

This program started the first of March 2011, so any slips from then until now can be used. Any Fairmont Fareway and Hy-Vee food store register slip can be used. Even slips from Hy-Vee Gas, Coffee Shop, Food Service, and Pharmacy help us toward the goal. Thanks to all who bring/ mail the slips to the Church, or mailing them to me or even dropping them off at my house. Even the very small amounts help.

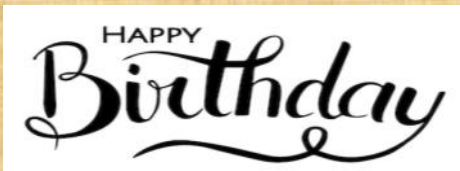
Reported by;
Jim Bock

Lee Trunkenbolz's new address is:

"Tell Grandma I've got all the clothes I need."

Thank you Margo, Cindy A, Carolyn, Beth, Dolores, Jane and Kathy J for folding and sealing the November newsletters!

See the full-color version of the newsletters on the church website: http://www.fairmontucc.org/



Dec 2 Antonio Johnson
Betty Jones
Dec 3 Julie Thate
Dec 5 Jim Hough
Dec 6 Mackenzie Brum-mond
Dec 7 Cynthia Celander
Dec 10 Jenna McAlister
Dec 11 Jonathon Meschke
Dec 14 Jan Shaffer
Kay Campe
Christina Hainy
Dec 15 Jacob Shoen
Braden Grefe
Tabitha Wayman
Dec 17 Kim Shaffer
Tim Huset
Dec 20 Craig Nelson
Trenton Jorgensen
Dec 21 Izzy Cruz
Dec 23 Caroline Olson
Melva Tonne
Dec 25 Gretchen Jorgensen
Dec 26 Rev. Cory Germain
Emma Germain
Dec 28 Cathy Celander
Dec 29 Eric B. Johnson
Jesse Lasch
Kora Kay Lasch
Dec 30 Destiny Massey
Ellen Germain
Dec 31 Katelyn Draper

Dec 4, Don & Shelby Marks 39 yrs
Dec 7 John & Donna Holstine 58 yrs
Dec 9 Brian & Julie Thate 21 yrs
Dec 18 Terry & Marcia Winegar 39 yrs
Dec 23 Robert & Diane Neusch 55 yrs
Dec 30 Lance & Jenny Willard 26 yrs